



State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509

State Rehabilitation Council Meeting Country Inn & Suites April 8, 2008

Public notice of upcoming meetings will be available on the Department of Education website under "conferences & meetings" at least 5 days prior to each meeting.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mitch Arnold, Sharon Bloechle, Katie Durfee, Alvin Fox, Sue Gieschen, Gayle Hahn, Jason Kerkman, Les Kimmons, Tim Kolb, Larry Niemeyer, Vicky Obrecht, Deb Osentowski, Kipp Ransom, Vicki Rasmussen, Angela Smith, Pearl Van Zandt, and Terry Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Frank Lloyd, Jay Ice

VR STAFF PRESENT: Don Crouch, Margy Hoffmann, Dennis King

VISITORS: Kathy Hoell, Independent Living Council; Brad Meurrens, Nebraska Advocacy Services

The meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) commenced at 10:00 a.m. Public notification of this meeting was made on the Nebraska Department of Education web site.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gayle Hahn called the meeting to order and introduced new members, Vicki Obrecht and Tim Kolb. All members introduced themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Brad Meurrens from Nebraska Advocacy Services and Kathy Hoell from the State Independent Living Council (SILC) reported that SILC is interested in exploring areas in which they could collaborate with the SRC. One area of common purpose is trying to enhance the work possibilities for persons with disabilities without giving up Medicaid health care benefits. Senator Johnson introduced LB1121, which would increase the eligibility limits for persons that would like to buy-in to Medicaid. The bill did not advance but an amendment to LB928 looks at altering the internal controls to achieve the desired enhancement. SILC's goal is to see more people with disabilities go to work and still maintain their medical coverage through Medicaid. SILC holds quarterly meetings and the SRC members were invited to attend.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Pearl Van Zandt moved and Alvin Fox seconded a motion to approve the meeting agenda as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 12, 2008

Pearl Van Zandt moved and Terry Wilson seconded a motion to approve the minutes from the February 12, 2008 meeting as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

FEEDBACK ON VR SERVICES

Tim Kolb shared that he was speaking to colleges about work incentives. UNL doesn't feel that VR supports four year degrees as the population of students with physical disabilities has dropped dramatically over the years. Persons with a learning disability are the largest population using disability services. Part of the problem may be that the referrals are not being made to VR for persons with only physical disabilities. Angela Smith shared that there is some miscommunication that VR only serves people with developmental or cognitive disabilities and not physical disabilities beyond transition services. Some may feel that a two-year degree will provide more job opportunities, potentially higher wages and costs less to go to a two-year college.

Jason Kerkman knew of an instance where someone left services because they were told by VR that they were unemployable. It was suggested that for benefits planning the "red book" should be shared so consumers can look through the criteria on their own. The criteria are also available online. Sometimes it's better to only share the pieces that can really be used or wanted so as not to overwhelm consumers with information that doesn't pertain to their situation. An organizational chart to follow step by step can be helpful so that individuals are not overwhelmed. Vicki Obrecht shared that a chart like this is being used in the schools where she works.

Terry Wilson shared that he was provided information right after surgery when he was still in the hospital and groggy. The hospital social worker did not give out printed information about contacting VR.

Alvin Fox shared that the school superintendent in his area feels that VR services are excellent.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Margy Hoffmann presented the Director's Report for Frank Lloyd.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Customer Satisfaction Survey is being reworked to better accommodate persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. It can often be difficult to serve people with a hearing impairment because there is a shortage of licensed interpreters across the state.

Goals for FY2009

Margy shared a copy of the Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation, Goals for Federal FY2009. The goals include: Meet the Federal Standards; Achieve 2,009 successful employment outcomes; Develop effective community partnerships; Increase the rehabilitation rate; Improve consumer satisfaction and engagement; Increase the opportunity for staff to gain knowledge and skill in the rehabilitation process; Strengthen interpersonal relations on employment teams; Increase the number of transition students who apply for the Employment Program and become successfully employed; and Increase the quality and timeliness of placements.

Transition Program

A Transition Round Table will be held on June 26. This is an opportunity for staff to get together and share their successes and barriers so that they can give valuable ideas to each other.

Work Place Survey

A copy of a Workplace Environment Survey was shared. Gallop has done a lot of research on how to create a positive work environment. According to research, the thirteen questions are an indicator of a good working environment for individuals. The wording of number five may be changed to say “overall” instead of “in the last seven days.” The wording of number eleven may change from “best friend” to “friend.” Workplace recognition has been difficult to accomplish so that all feel satisfied with the program.

Commissioner of Education

Both the Commissioner of Education, Doug Christensen, and Deputy Commissioner, Polly Feis, have resigned effective July 15. The State Board has hired a national organization to do a search for their replacements. The Commissioner has been very supportive of VR services.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Members met in their committee groups to work on the goals.

TBI PILOT PROJECT

Keri Bennett from the Kearney VR office shared information about pilot programs for persons with a brain injury.

- Several agencies piloted the use of a brain injury screening tool called HELPS. The pilot ran May – December 2007 and the data analysis is complete. In total the agencies (Vocational Rehabilitation Offices, a mental health provider, a homeless shelter, a battered women’s shelter, a developmental disabilities service provider and coordinator, and Waverly Public Schools) reported a 26% positive screening rate. The shelters positive screening rate was much higher.
- Keri is available for case consultation and training on brain injury cases. Many resources are also available for use. The program is looking for less expense, more practical methods to diagnose brain injury when needed.
- Goodwill Industries of Greater Nebraska and Developmental Services of Nebraska continue to work on the brain injury employment pilot to employ and sustain employment for persons with a brain injury. There have been many successful work placements and they are working to develop more employment partnerships and more referrals for the program. The goal is to move toward admission to the program by functional limitation rather than diagnosis.
- The Brain Book system is a comprehensive day-planning system and compensatory skills training program specially designed for persons experiencing cognitive impairment due to brain injury or other disabling condition. The pilot is a cooperative effort among several agencies and the objective is to demonstrate a measurable increase in cognitive function of individuals that will lead to greater independence. Training will be conducted via webinar. Brain Book fact sheets were distributed.
- The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Conference is being held, April 24-25 in Grand Island at the Midtown Holiday Inn. The conference brochure was disseminated.

CONSUMER SURVEY UPDATE

Dennis King spoke about surveying of consumers during their process in VR. Larry Niemeyer's team in Columbus did a pilot of the Employment Discussion Survey and it is now being used statewide. The results are showing 95% positive responses. The Job Planning Discussion Survey has now been piloted by Larry's team. The survey was too far removed from the activity and taking too long to complete so it has been broken into three sub groups as shown in the handout provided. The survey can be completed at home and sent in to the state office by self addressed envelope. The purpose of the survey is for consumers to tell VR how they are doing and where they can improve. It was asked if people felt that their responses were anonymous. Returning the form to the State Office should help with this. It is hoped that the survey will help with statewide uniformity.

SENATOR'S LUNCHEON

The Senator's Luncheon was held on March 25. Kipp Ransom shared that 20 senators attended and they were able to share the brochure with them. Senator Schimek asked why so few people in her district use VR services but they were unsure of the answer. The brochure lists many of the businesses who are employed through VR and shows that all counties in the state are being served. Senators were speaking very highly of the agency. A thank you note was sent to the senators for attending. Council members who attended felt that the luncheon was a success and worth doing again next year.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Don Crouch had introduced a revision to the Operational Procedures at the previous meeting. The suggested changes were in item II.C.6., to say that the executive committee can vote to terminate membership of an individual; and to remove item II.C.7., which says a member must resign in writing – as the Council can't force someone to write a letter.

Pearl Van Zandt moved and Jason Kerkman seconded a motion to accept the Operational Procedures as amended. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

SRC EXPENSES

Don Crouch shared that monthly expenditure for SRC meetings range from \$1400 – \$1700.

CAP REPORT

Vicki Rasmussen provided a written report on CAP cases in the meeting mailing. The CAP regional meeting for Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri will be held in Kansas City next week.

SILC

Tim Kolb shared that he has just been officially appointed as a member of SILC and hasn't attended a meeting yet. The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) was established under the Rehabilitation Act. It is equal with VR in working toward independent living for consumers. Their goal is to facilitate various means of helping individuals to live in the community as opposed to institutions. A state plan was written and approved. The Council has five committees: Advocacy, Outreach, Resource, Financial and Executive. The Financial Committee is working to obtain financial support outside of federal dollars as federal funds have limitations on their use. Applicants to the Assistive Technology Partnership who disagree with the services offered can go to

SILC for arbitration. It was suggested that SILC be a topic on a future SRC agenda to better understand all of their activities and to see where the two groups could collaborate.

ATP REPORT

Angela Smith shared that the Central Nebraska ATP Youth Conference was held on April 1 in Kearney. Agency representatives were there with the focus on getting ready for a job and using technology. There was a great turnout from the central area of the state. The conference is being held on April 8 in Bridgeport and in Omaha on April 24th.

CLIENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

- Deb Osentowski shared that there are some concerns about the Employment Discussion Survey not being usable by individuals who are deaf. The Committee will work with the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to see what changes can be made.
- A high percentage of consumers with autism are being referred and the Committee would like to see a VR staff person who specializes in the area.
- It would be interesting to see figures on which disability groups are attending four year colleges – especially UNL.

Tim Kolb moved and Les Kimmons seconded a motion that the SRC supports VR creating a staff person who specializes in the area of autism and could train and support other staff members. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

EMPLOYER SERVICES COMMITTEE

- Jason Kerkman shared that the Value of Partnership Conference for VR staff is being held on Saturday, September 10 at the Country Inn & Suites in Lincoln. The goal of the conference is to develop better training opportunities with Nebraska hospitals.
- The Committee would like to recognize an Employer of the Year for VR services. The criteria and process for the award was handed out. The award would be given in October to coincide with National Disability Employment Month. The Council suggested giving the award at another function where other community members would see the recognition. A Chamber of Commerce meeting was suggested. The newspaper could be contacted for an article in The Neighborhood Extra or in the business achievement section.

Jason Kerkman moved and Pearl Van Zandt seconded a motion for the SRC to recognize an Employer of the Year based on the process and criteria that was distributed. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

TRANSITION SERVICES COMMITTEE

- Angela Smith reported that the Transition Summit was held last week.
- Jack Shepard has done the paperwork for the Youth Facilitator position and then will work to create the Youth Leadership Council.
- Services in transition typically start at age 14 and then adult services begin at age 18. The Committee was asking how to move beyond the “typical” thoughts so that a student can get a job at age 16 and use VR services.
- Youth with a borderline IQ can’t get VR services after graduation. The Committee would like to investigate ways to continue to help those kids. Don Crouch shared that this was previously a category for services but the Feds have told Nebraska that this category can no longer be used. Nebraska is exploring possible avenues to give aid to these youth.

Vicky Obrecht has chosen to serve on the Transition Services Committee and Tim Kolb has chosen the Client Services Committee.

Sharon Bloechle brought newsletters from the LDA Council to share with members.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.